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well equipped for this work. A good many of the *terzines* we find in this book not only convey exactly Dante's thought and not "*disjecti membra poetæ*," but also the original and peculiar shade of color of Dante's words. See, for instance, to quote only one passage, the translation of the last *terzines* of the *Purgatorio* (p. 204). Of course there are instances in which the translator remains far below the original and even modifies unduly Dante's images, but almost never do we find cases of real mistranslations. I wonder, however, why Professor Grandgent does not give in their Latin original those words which Dante himself gives in Latin, and which belong in most of the cases to the Church liturgy, like the "*Asperges me*" (p. 203), and the "*Te lucis ante terminum*" (p. 362).

The five lectures on the "*Ladies of Dante's Lyrics*" contain not only, carefully stated, the conclusions of modern literary criticism about the historical identification of the ladies mentioned in Dante's lyrics — Violetta, Matelda, Pietra, Beatrice, and Lisetta — but also a very remarkable psychological analysis of the nature and the character of Love as it was conceived by Dante and the poets of the "*dolce stil nuovo*." In this book also quite a number of Dante's lyrics are rendered into English, reproducing exactly the metrical systems of the originals. They confirm our impression of Professor Grandgent's ability as a translator of Dante, and make us hope that he will give us a complete new translation of the whole of Dante's poetical work, which will be by no means a useless addition to the many that we already possess.

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WESSEL GANSFORT: LIFE AND WRITINGS. EDWARD W. MILLER. PRINCIPAL WORKS, tr. by JARED W. SCUDDER. 2 vols. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1917. Vol. I, pp. xvi, 333. Vol. II, pp. 369.

In studying any important movement in the world's development, after due attention and estimation have been given to the chief movers in it, our interest turns to those who were less prominent but whose importance was almost as great since they laid foundations and prepared the way for the chief actors. These John the Baptists are always appealing figures; and it is necessary to study them in order to perceive the movement as an orderly development and not an unrelated outbreak. There are many such forerunners in case of the Protestant Reformation. One whose acquaintance, it is safe to say, comparatively few in our time have made, is intro-

duced to us in these two valuable volumes—John Wessel Gansfort.

He was born at Groningen in North Holland about 1420. The name “Gansfort” (in Dutch “Goesevort”; anglicized into “Gansvoort”), while belonging to the family, was apparently little used by this member of it, who was known to his contemporaries as John Wessel. He was educated in the schools established by the Brethren of the Common Life at Groningen, and at Zwolle, some fifty miles distant. At the latter he met a man about forty years older than himself, who came to be known as Thomas à Kempis, and who was then engaged on his *Imitation of Christ*. An intimacy sprang up between them, which had definite results on each. The elder man urged the younger to enter the monastic life; but though he was at first inclined to this, he finally decided against it, and eventually became a strong opponent of monasticism. On the other hand, it is said that Wessel criticised certain parts of the *Imitation*, and that Thomas accepted the criticism and changed them; so that when the book appeared it contained, according to the biography published a generation after his death, “fewer traces of human superstition.”

From the school at Zwolle Wessel went to the University of Cologne, which was the home of dogmatic orthodoxy. Dissatisfaction with the lecture-room had the not infrequent result of driving an active, inquiring mind to the library, and perhaps accentuating in him the early-formed bent of asking every established habit and opinion in religion the inconvenient question, “Why?” At Cologne, though not in the University, he learned Greek and Hebrew, both of which languages were frowned upon by the ecclesiastical authorities, and in some cases elsewhere were prohibited. This made him a marked man; and constituted him a sufficient marvel to be known as “a three-language man.” Here also he became an ardent champion of Realism; and, when about thirty years old, he left Cologne for Paris in order to confute at their citadel the Nominalists in the controversy then raging. “As representing dissent against current opinion and usage, Nominalism became to some degree identified with the cause of intellectual liberty and with progress and reform in the Church. . . . It thus served as a bond of intellectual interest to those who in the fifteenth century and the next were impatient with current dogmatism and eager for reform in the administration of the Church” (I, 67, 68). But after reaching his new university at Paris he discovered that there was more to be said in favor of Nominalism than he had imagined, and

moreover that his natural disposition was towards the things for which it then stood. He therefore abandoned Realism and became and remained a Nominalist.

For some fifteen years Wessel continued in Paris as a licensed teacher, or *privat docent*. He was cut off from rising to academic distinction because he never took a doctor's degree. He was prevented from taking the road to advancement which lay open to many scholars — the Church — because he refused to be ordained priest. His interests were outside the State and the Court. He therefore never attained a prominent position in the world. And this was in accordance with his scholar's taste for study and quiet. He had taken a degree in medicine and practised in some cases. Professor Miller's statements as to his success are somewhat contradictory: "It is highly improbable that he came to eminence in the science of medicine" (p. 72); "Wessel's unusual skill in medicine is beyond question" (p. 85). Only once did he step into official position. In 1477 he was appointed Professor of Theology in the University of Heidelberg. But his advanced opinions were out of keeping with those of the rest of the Faculty, and he realized that by remaining there he would expose himself to arrest by the Inquisition. Several of his friends had lighted stakes or darkened dungeons; and although he wrote to a friend, "I do not fear anything that I may have to undergo for the purity of the faith, if only there be no calumny" (p. 238), yet he was aware that there would be calumny, that is, false accusations supported by unfair evidence and proceedings without regard to justice. He therefore resigned his chair within two years and retired to his native Groningen. Here and in the neighborhood he spent the remaining ten years of his life under the protection of his friend, the Bishop of Utrecht. He died in 1489.

Wessel impressed himself profoundly as a teacher upon his generation and the following. Among his pupils were Jacob Wimpfeling, Rudolph Agricola, and John Reuchlin, all of whom were conduits for conveying the forces of the Renaissance into the Reformation. Wessel was notable for independence of mind. "He presented hackneyed subjects in an original and thought-provoking fashion. The boldness of his assertions, the startling character of his paradoxes, arrested the attention and stimulated the minds of his hearers." He had "clearness of statement and lucidity of explanation." "He possessed also a very winning manner in private and in public discourse" (pp. 116, 117). But it was the epoch-making character of his opinions which appealed most to minds athirst in the aridity of

scholastic theology. He was one of the first to insist on the importance of the study of the Scriptures, and for this, of a knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. He held light that cardinal doctrine of the Middle Ages, that grace must be mediated through the Church, and regarded the Christian's relation to God as personal and direct, justification being through faith. For this reason he constantly disparaged the "means by which the mediæval Church made reconciliation with God seem in large part something to be merited by good deeds or penitential suffering or to be obtained through the good offices of the Pope or a priest." This "cut the foundation from under the Church's penitential system, belittled the value of confession, endowment of masses, repetition of prayers, pilgrimages, celibacy, and asceticism in general. These 'good works,' which formed so conspicuous a part of the life of the mediæval Church, had, he declared, nothing in them to merit salvation" (p. 133). The Catholic Church, he held, embraces all true followers of Jesus Christ in all parts of the world. The Scriptures are the final authority in faith and conduct. No prelate, not even the Pope, is to be obeyed if his commands do not accord with the teachings of the Scriptures. The Pope has no authority to impose penance. It is sin, not excommunication, that separates a soul from God. When a wise man differs from the Pope, one should stand by or agree with, not the Pope, but the wise man, who should by no means forsake his opinion to follow papal authority. Purgatory is not a place of material and penal suffering but a vestibule of Paradise, where increasing love for Christ matures the redeemed soul and advances it towards the full bliss of heaven.

After Wessel's death Rhodius of Utrecht, one of his pupils, brought some of his writings to Luther to ask his opinion as to their publication. Luther was surprised and delighted to find one who had not bowed the knee to Baal. "My joy and courage began to increase, and I had not the slightest doubt that I had been teaching the truth, since he, living at a different time, under another sky, in another land, and under such diverse circumstances, is so constantly in accord with me in all things, not only as to substance but in the use of almost the same words" (p. 232). To this happy agreement there was one exception — Wessel's doctrine of the Eucharist. To the publication of this Luther refused to give his approval, but sent it to Oecolampadius for his opinion. The latter approved it and handed it to Zwingli; with whom it became one of the chief influences in moulding the view of the Eucharist maintained by the Swiss Reformers.

The first volume, that by Professor Miller, gives the impression of having been written at different times and not being fully welded together; indeed, the author says, his studies in this field have been pursued during brief vacations. There are many repetitions and sometimes contradictory statements. Thus he says (p. 101) that it is thought the Bishop of Burgundy paid Wessel's board at the convent of Sta. Clara in the latter part of his life; but, on the other hand, "after he reached Paris there is no indication that he received assistance from any one" (p. 114). A biography should give at once the data as to the birth of its subject, that the reader may know where to place him. These Professor Miller does not give until page 42, though on page 19 he incidentally mentions the year in which Wessel was born. The second volume contains translations by Professor Scudder of Wessel's principal theological works. Students of the precursors of the Reformation are indebted to the author and the translator for presenting in so accessible and attractive a form the work of one of whom Luther said, "If I had read his works earlier, my enemies might think that Luther had absorbed everything from Wessel, his spirit is so in accord with mine."

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LIFE AND LETTERS OF STOPFORD BROOKE. LAWRENCE P. JACKS, D.D., LL.D. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1917. 2 vols. Vol. I, pp. x, 350. Vol. II, pp. 351-718. \$4.75.

Writing to a friend about reading a certain Life, Stopford Brooke asks, "Why do you read a book of that kind, and done by a relation too? One knows beforehand all that it will be, and that more than half will be of interest to the relative and none to the world." (I, 524). This, it must be confessed, is a somewhat arbitrary ruling, and if we were to follow it, we should lay aside this *Life and Letters of Stopford Brooke*. It is written by a "relation" — Dr. Jacks is a son-in-law; many of the letters are addressed to "relatives" and are of interest only to them. But there the parallel ends. Much of this Life is of interest "to the world." We could wish the correspondence had reached out to wider circles; but what there is gives to the picture an intimate touch, and the book as a whole presents us with the portrait of a man, magnetic, brilliant — somewhat Bohemian — the artist-preacher of London in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

Stopford Brooke was born in Ireland of Irish parents. There went to his make-up English, Scotch, and Welsh elements as well